



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## ARTICLE V.

---

# IBRAHIM OF MOSUL: A STUDY IN ARABIC LITERARY TRADITION.

By FRANK DYER CHESTER, Ph.D.,

ASSISTANT IN SEMITIC LANGUAGES IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

---

Presented to the Society March, 1894.

---

ONE of the most fascinating characters in the history of the Bagdad caliphate is Ibrahim of Mosul (Ibrâhîm al-Mauṣulî), the foremost singer and composer in the reign of that celebrated despot, Hârûn ar-Rashîd. As a boon companion and prime favorite, he became the repository of confidence both for the caliph and for his erstwhile Barmecide viziers. Hence the importance and interest attaching to traditions which relate to him and his affairs, and have been handed down through his family line or the schools of music and literature. They still lie numerously imbedded in the various histories, in the Kitâb al-Aġânî—a work which I class by its contents as a musico-biographical encyclopædia and from which Ibn Hallikân derived much of his memoiristic information—and in the host of anthological productions still extant.

The outward details of his life have been summed up very briefly by Kosegarten;\* at greater length, and from several sources, by Hammer-Purgstall,† who made good use of the Gotha epitome known as the Mohtâr al-Aġânî; also by Ahlwardt,‡ who paid more attention than the former to the inner historical and artistic development of the period; and finally by Caussin de Perceval,§ entirely on the basis of the unabridged “Book of Songs” as contained in the Paris MS. But these scholars merely cited the traditions which they found, or translated them, sometimes literally, sometimes freely, according to

---

\* Proœmium to his *Alii Ispahan. liber cantilenarum magnus*, vol. i. (unic.), p. 26.

† *Literaturgesch. der Araber*, iii. 769 ff.

‡ Vorwort to his *Diwân des Abu Nowâs*, p. 13.

§ *Journal Asiatique* (1873), 7<sup>e</sup> série, ii. 546, in an article posthumously published.

taste, as if an examination of their correlation and interdependence were uncalled for, or even unnecessary. Therefore, in the following study of a couple of coincident traditions found in two or more of the sources, a stricter critical treatment will be attempted, in the hope of thereby bringing out new facts respecting the sources themselves.\*

A good opportunity for comparative work offers itself in the three versions (I am informed that there is at least one other) of the story of Ibrahim and the Devil, a conspectus of two of which is appended below. This tradition is reported by the *Kitāb al-Aġānī* in Ibrahim's own words, as they purport to have been repeated to his son Ishāk, by him to his son Hammād, and by the latter to Moḥammed ibn Mazyad,† who passed it on to Al-Iṣbahānī, the author of the *Aġānī*.‡ Yet it is identical with the anecdote in the *Thousand and One Nights*, entitled "Story of Abu Ishāk an-Nadīm Ibrāhīm al-Mauṣulī (and his adventure) with Abu Murra."§ Burton, of course, translates the latter form of the story, and in a note he criticises his predecessor, Lane, for failing to perceive its existence in the body of the *Nights*, and giving only an abstract of it from another source.|| But Burton himself mistook in supposing that that source could have been Al-Mas'ūdī ("French translation, vol. vi., p. 340"); for the passage cited relates the appearance of the Devil to Ishāk, his son (also known as Al-Mauṣulī), in the palace of the caliph, not in his own home.¶ Hence the footnotes in which Burton calls attention to its differing characteristics help little in the study of the story of Ibrahim and the Devil. His alternative, that Lane borrowed from the Ḥalba(t) al-Kumeit, is of course the correct one.\*\* This anthology was written by Shams ad-Dīn an-Nawwājī (d. 1455 A. D.). Although I have had no access to its text, I perceive from Lane's abstract, which is often literal, that its version stands midway between that of the *Aġānī* and that of the *Nights*. Its description of the Devil's disguise agrees with the details given in the former, while its use of the appellation Abu Murra in speaking of the Devil accords with the latter. There are also other agreements with the *Aġānī* account. The story, however, received an addition or two: e. g. the statement that Ar-Rashīd, after appointing Saturday for the "day off," gave Ibrahim two thousand dīnārs.

\* Cf. some remarks by Derenbourg in the *Revue Critique* (1888), no. 15.

† Also known by his surname Ibn Abi-l-Azhar (cf. *Aġānī*, v. 66 below middle; at the conclusion of this story, v. 38, incorrectly Ibn al-Azhar).

‡ Ed. Bulak, v. pp. 36-38. Reprinted, with various omissions, in the *Riwayāt al-Aġānī* (ed. Beirut 1888) i. p. 35.

§ So Macnaghten. But Cairo ed. (1302 A. H.) iii. p. 163 has Iblīs for Abu Murra.

|| Cf. Lady Burton's ed., iv. p. 321. Lane (1st ed.) i. 223: compare his defense, iii. 246, overlooked by Burton.

¶ Perhaps the index to Al-Mas'ūdī (vol. vi.) misled him. It makes the same blunder.

\*\* Cf. Lane, l. c., i. 224, footnote \*.

But the version in the Thousand and One Nights is considerably shortened from the original form of the story, and toned down to a mere tale. This is shown by the numerous blanks in the right hand column of the parallel translations below.\*

The first point of difference in the Nights as regards subject-matter is the entire absence of the slave-girls from the first part of the story. Then again Ibrahim has a plurality of doorkeepers, but no chamberlains. Harun makes no pithy remarks, either at the beginning or at the end (the wish excepted). The unwelcome sheikh wears one tunic and white garments instead of two tunics and short boots. The style of his cap varies, but the species of his perfumery is unnoticed. He is less discourteous, and by no means sarcastic, in his first request for a song. The insult contained in his compliment is less distinctly emphasized, so much less that the name Ibrahim is actually not employed.† Abu Ishâk sings only twice; and no allusion is made to his great care in singing to the caliph, perhaps the most delicate touch of the story. The first two of the Devil's songs vary slightly in vocabulary, probably on account of bad copying; but the third song has received an additional couplet, as well as a rearrangement of lines.‡ The musical technicality or reference to the *mâhûrî* metre of the third song is dropped, showing that the design of this narrative, which was originally to explain how Ibrahim became famous for the use of that metre, had been exchanged for the mere desire to relate a sensational anecdote. Ibrahim's reflections on his way to inform the caliph of his experience are also omitted; and his present, instead of being delivered for him, is taken by him.

Now all these differences in the trend and wording of the story go to show that the version in the Thousand and One Nights is a free borrowing from some written biographical source. That it is not a form corrupted by the repetitions of story-tellers is evident, I think, from the remarkably long verbal agreements with the text of the *Agânî*, a work which belongs back in the tenth century. Yet it must be later than the version in the *Halba(t) al-Kumeit* (used by Lane), for reasons already given, and therefore subsequent to 1450 A. D. The minor differences of vocabulary and turns of phrase are probably due to the careless copying of the Nights during the three or four centuries of its history.

---

\* In my translations, when the words or constructions differ in the originals, the English renderings vary to correspond.

† So Macnaghten and Cairo eds. *Ṣaḥḥānī* (Beirut, 5 vols.), however, "Ibrahim."

‡ In one case (إذا نأى for إذا دنا), the Nights has a more apposite reading. But the Bulak text of the *Agânî* may be at fault. It would be interesting to collate all the MSS. on this passage (v. 38, top).

§ Particularly its disagreement in the details of the Devil's disguise.

The question now arises, what reason is there for the existence of this anecdote in the Nights? It must be answered that, so far as it is concerned, Lane seems to be correct in his surmise that, just as the old groundwork of the Thousand and One Nights (the Persian work entitled the "Thousand Nights") became by the addition of tales of Arab origin\* the least portion of the collection, so the anecdotes—especially the thirteen extending from the 680th to the 698th night,† of which "Ibrahim of Mosul and the Devil" is the seventh—were borrowed from older books, more classical in style, modernized, and inserted to supply lost portions or augment the original series of stories.‡ It is Lane's opinion, however, that the borrowing was by means of oral communication for a number of years before the written work, the Thousand and One Nights, appeared. It seems more probable, from what has been said up to this point, that the borrowing was made through a chain of written sources. Furthermore, though this story of Ibrahim was shortened, most of the other twelve anecdotes were probably lengthened and developed, as it were, from sober tradition into the freer form of fiction. At least one of them, the fourth in order, entitled "Story of Yûnus the Scribe (and his adventure) with Al-Walîd ibn Sahl," exhibits such a history. For the basis of it is to be found in the Kitâb al-Aġânî, in the biography of Yûnus. Likewise the "Story of Jamîl ibn Ma'mar (told) to Hârûn ar-Rashîd," the eighth of these anecdotes, describes a scene, though not the incidents, of one of the traditions adduced on authority in the biography of Jamîl.§

The story of Ibrahim and the Devil, having many parallels in the ana of other Arab singers who endeavored to mystify their patrons respecting their sources of musical inspiration, requires little comment here upon its unhistorical nature as a story. There are two accounts of an appearance of the Devil to his son Ishâk; the one in the Nights (the eleventh anecdote of the thirteen), where a young woman plays an important part in the proceedings; and the other in Al-Mas'ûdî's *Murâj ad-Dahab*, so unhappily referred to by Burton. There are also in the Aġânî two accounts of the Devil's visitation to Ibrahim ibn

\* Such was the judgment of Hammer-Purgstall: cf. Lane, l. c., iii. 741 middle.

† Cf. Lane, l. c., iii. 238 middle.

‡ Cf. Lane, l. c., iii. 744 middle; and Burton in his Terminal Essay, ed. Lady B., vi. 295, where, for the words "*They end in* (two long detective stories)," should be read "*They are followed by*, etc."

§ Other anecdotes in the Nights are equally traceable to a written source such as the Aġânî. The story of "Isaac of Mosul and the Merchant" (ed. Lady B., iii. 288) should be carefully compared with the version in the Aġânî (v. 126). The Basket-story of Ishâk is, on the other hand, a freer adaptation, doubtless transmitted through an intervening anthology or two, of the story formerly told of his father Ibrahim (see Aġânî, v. 41-2).

al-Mahdî,\* a story of Ibn Jâmi', who was not of Persian but of good Koreishite birth, inspired by a *jinn*,† and a story of Moḥârik, Ibrahim al-Mausulî's favorite pupil, surprised by a vision of Iblîs in the form of an old sheikh.‡ Under the same category of weird stories come the traditions, also found in the *Agânî*, that one of Ishâk's most famous melodies was learned from cackling geese,§ and that his father Ibrahim one night, in a grotto belonging to his estate, enjoyed a secret opportunity to plagiarize on the efforts of two miauling cats.|| It must not be supposed, however, that educated persons of the tenth century, among whom one would certainly class the author of the *Agânî*, believed in the truth of these narratives. With acumen Al-Isbahânî says, at the close of the account of Ibrahim and the Devil: "Thus am I informed of this story by Ibn al-Azhar (Ibn Abi-l-Azhar). I do not know what to say about it. Perhaps Ibrahim made up this tale to gain esteem by it; or it was made up and told about him, though a foundation for the story is (afforded by the following), which is more like the truth of it." Thereupon he details a tradition, according to which Ibrahim dreamed that a man met him and opportunely suggested that he set some words of the poet Dû-r-Rimma (= "he of the withered limb," not Dû-r-Rumma), to the amazingly fine new melody which he had just composed in the *mâḥarî* metre. But, though the idea that Ibrahim had a dream is more natural than that an apparition came to him in broad daylight, it should be noted that in the latter event he was taught a *mâḥarî* tune, apparently the first one of the kind known to him, while in the former he is inspired with words for that tune. The stories therefore do not hang together, and in so far both must be pronounced fictitious. The possibility suggests itself merely that Harun was minded to play Ibrahim a trick some day when he had let him off from court functions; and whether he initiated him in the *mâḥarî* metre or not matters little, the point of interest being that he once upon a time showed himself a well-disguised, witty, and artistic Devil.

Another tradition worthy of study occurs in Al-Isbahânî's biography of Ibrahim. It concerns an event which happened at a time in Ibrahim's life earlier than that in which the one just treated is supposed to have occurred.

At the death of Harun's father, the caliph Al-Mahdî, in the year 785 A. D., Ibrahim, then forty or more years of age, was beginning to leave behind his older competitors in the art of singing, among whom were Yahyâ ibn Marzûk (al-Makkî) and Ibn

\* Cf. Barbier de Meynard in *Journal Asiatique* (1869), 6<sup>e</sup> série, xiii. 307.

† Cf. Caussin de Perceval, l. c., p. 542, and *Agânî* vi. 71 top.

‡ See Brûnnow's vol. xxi. of the *Agânî*, p. 232.

§ *Agânî*, v. 89 middle.

|| *Agânî*, v. 20 bottom.

Jâmi', and to stand forth conspicuously in his profession. His old master Siyâṭ had just died. Meanwhile, Fuleih ibn al-'Aurâ' was ranked of the old school of composers, Ḥakam al-Wâḍī was only mediocre in his rendering, Moḥammed ar-Raff (az-Zaff ?) was unoriginal, and Moḥârik, 'Alâwiyya, and Ishâk were yet young and of the new generation. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdî, the half-brother of Harun, was also but a youth of sixteen, and, according to the orthodox ideas of the Moslems, so hampered by his royal birth as to be incapable of rising higher than the position of a dilettante. The consequence was that Ibrahim al-Mauṣulî stepped to the front, and enjoyed a much-coveted familiarity with the ruling monarch, winning through his favor great fame and large rewards for his marked musical powers. Sometimes, however, he must have overstepped the bounds, as a realization of his unique position filled his mind. Accordingly a certain degree of credence may be given to the following account of a musical séance under the caliph Al-Hâdî. In the "*Ta'rîḥ ar-Rusul wa-l-Mulâk*" of Aṭ-Ṭabarî\* it reads thus :

One day [Ibrahim speaks] we were with Mûsâ [i. e. Al-Hâdî], and Ibn Jâmi' and Mo'âd ibn aṭ-Tobeib† were with him (too). It was the first day that Mo'âd had come in to our presence, and Mo'âd was excellent in (singing) songs and well acquainted with some of the old ones. (Al-Hâdî) said : "Whoever of you pleases me (with a song) shall have his choice (of reward)."<sup>‡</sup> So Ibn Jâmi' sang him a song ; but it did not move him. (Now) I understood his desire in songs. So, (when) he said, "Come now, Ibrahim !" I sang to him :

"Suleimā sometimes holds reunions ;  
But where are her sweetmeats ? where, Oh ?"

He was so pleased that he arose from his seat and raised his voice and said "Repeat." So I repeated. Then he said "This is what I like :§ make (your) choice." I said "Commander of the Faithful, the garden of 'Abd al-Malik and its gushing fountain."|| Then his eyes revolved in his head till they were like two coals and he said : "(You) son of an uncircumcised woman, you desire that the vulgar may hear that you pleased me, and that I gave you your choice and presented you with a fief. By Allah, if your foolishness which conquers your soundness of sense were not (due to) haste, I should strike off that (thing) your tear-fountains¶ are in !" He was silent a while, and I saw the Angel

\* Series iii. 1, p. 595, ed. Houtsma and Guyard.

† The Agânî seems to offer nothing respecting this person.

‡ Literally, "Whoever of you pleases me, his choice (shall be) to him." The exact sense of طرب is to tickle the fancy of a person.

§ Literally, "This is my taste."

|| عَيْنَةُ الْحَرَارَةِ.

¶ عَيْنَاكَ.

of Death between me and him, awaiting his command. Then he called to Ibrahim al-Harrânî and said: "Take this fool by the hand and lead him into the treasury, and let him take from it what he will." So Al-Harrânî took me into the treasury and said "How much will you take?" I said "One hundred *badra*."\* He said "Wait till I consult him." I said "Then eighty." He said "Till I consult him!" Then I knew what he meant, and I said "Seventy *badra* for me and thirty for you." He said "Now you have it right: go ahead." So I went away with seven hundred thousand (dirhams), and the Angel of Death went away from me.†

That such an incident as this took place in the life of Ibrahim is made clear by the occurrence of an equally interesting and ingenuous account in the *Agânî*.‡ It appears, however, to have descended (from Ishâk) through a different channel of tradition. Although agreeing verbally in parts, it varies considerably concerning the circumstances of the occasion. Aṭ-Ṭabarî states that his narrative was told (in his day?) on the authority of Ishâk "or someone else," on the authority of Ibrahim, as if it made little difference to his readers from whom he got hold of it. But Al-Iṣbahânî gives a chain of evidence, according to his custom: "Yahyâ ibn 'Alî from his father ('Alî ibn Yahyâ), from Ishâk." For the benefit of comparison the version in the *Agânî* is here translated. After describing the morose and sour-tempered Al-Hâdî, Ishâk is reported to have said:

My father was singing songs to him one day, and he said: "Sing me the kind of song I like and am pleased with, and you shall have your choice (of reward)." He said: "Commander of the Faithful, if Saturn were not in opposition to me with his cold, I should hope to attain to what is in your mind." (Ibrahim said) For I never used to see him give ear to any of the songs. His attention was (always) to its genealogy and its subtlety (of expression); and the school of Ibn Sureij he praised more highly than the school of Ma'bad. So I sang to him (this) piece of his:

"Surely a weariness overtakes me at the remembrance of thee;  
As the sparrow shakes himself free when the rain-drops moisten him."

Thereupon he thrust his hand into the opening of his cuirass and lowered it an arm-length.§ Then he said: "Well done, by Allah! (Sing me) more." So I sang:

"O love for her! increase in me ardor every night;  
O carelessness of the days! thy meeting-place is the Judgment Day!"

\* There is ostensibly a play on this word *بَادِرَة* in *بَدَرَة* (= haste) above.

† Literally "from my face."

‡ Ed. *Bulâk* v. 16.

§ In his excitement.



Then he thrust his hand into his cuirass and lowered it another arm-length or near it, and said: "(Sing me) more. You villain, well done, by Allah! You must have your choice, Ibrahim." (But) I sang:

"I renounced thee so that 'twas said 'He knows not love.'  
And I visited thee so that 'twas said 'He has no patience'."

Then he raised his voice and said "Well done, my fine fellow! Come, what will you?" I said "My master, the fountain of Marwân in Medina." Then his eyes revolved in his head till they were like two coals, and he said "(You) son of an uncircumcised woman, you desire to publish me in this assembly, so that people may say 'He pleased him and he gave him his choice'; and (you wish) to make me (subject to) talk and report. Ibrahim al-Harrânî, take this fool by the hand, when you go, and lead him into the private treasury. If he take everything in it, let him have it." So I entered and took fifty thousand dînars.

There is a manifest value in comparing these two narratives of the same remarkable event in Ibrahim's life, aside from the differences which appear in their subject matter. The status of secular tradition in the time of the historian Aṭ-Ṭabarî was evidently that of floating hearsay and inexact testimony, even for the period preceding him by only from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years. On the other hand, the good authority for the account in the *Agânî* happens to be very well known in this particular case. The *Kitâb al-Fihrist*, a bibliography proved from at least four passages within it to have been written in the year 987 A. D., states that 'Alî ibn Yahyâ (see chain of authorities above) was a contemporary and pupil of Ishâk, and that he wrote a book entitled "History of Ishâk ibn Ibrahim." It also informs us that he died hardly forty years later than Ishâk, and that his son Yahyâ lived until 912 A. D., at which time the author of the *Agânî* was a youth of fifteen.† It may be said, therefore, with all probability, that Yahyâ put into Al-Iṣbahânî's hands papers in his possession which contained this story of Ibrahim and Al-Hâdî, if he did not copy it directly from his father's book into his own; for the *Fihrist* informs us that he also composed a history of Ishâk, a statement which is corroborated in the *Agânî* in the biography of Ishâk.‡ Of course it is probable that Yahyâ's father merely heard the story from his celebrated teacher, and may not have written it out entirely as it was told to him. But in any case it was transmitted through a direct line of well-known traditionists to the author of the "Book of Songs."

---

\* Ar. أَحَسَنْتَ لِلَّهِ أَجْرَكَ.

† See ed. Flügel, p. 143. Ibn Hallikân closely follows the *Fihrist* in his articles on 'Alî and his son Yahyâ.

‡ See v. 102 bottom.

That Aṭ-Ṭabarī, however, gives his little anecdotes on less good authority, there is an indication in his tradition from a certain Al-Karmānī, who related that Al-Hādī despatched Yahyā ibn Ḥālid with a ring as token of good-will to Ibrahim al-Mausulī for the purpose of bringing him back to court. For, in the later years of Al-Mahdī, Ibrahim had been forced to seek a hiding-place through having violated his oath that he would not associate with his two sons, Mūsā and Hārūn. But, according to the family tradition, known to Al-Isbahānī directly from Ḥammād, who wrote a history of his grandfather Ibrahim, it was not the Barmecide vizier but the family relatives who brought back the great singer into Al-Hādī's presence, where he announced in touching lines of his own composition the sad news of his favorite wife's decease.\* Had Ḥammād known that Yahyā the Barmecide was sent after his grandfather on that memorable occasion, he would surely have mentioned the fact with great emphasis; for his family pride—and his father's, too—was enormous.

In the light of the foregoing remarks it is certainly fair to conclude that the traditionists upon whom Aṭ-Ṭabarī depends were in many cases "outsiders," speaking from hearsay only, and that they are to be graded below the professional men of music and letters whose schools of tradition preserved authoritative testimony to the history of persons who had formerly been connected with them.

## CONSPECTUS.

### AGĀNĪ.

### 1001 NIGHTS.

I asked Ar-Rashīd that he would give me a day in the week in which he would not send for me for any cause or pretext, that I might be alone therein with my maidens<sup>2</sup> and my friends.

He granted me Saturday,<sup>3</sup> saying "It is a day I find burdensome,<sup>4</sup> so amuse yourself however you wish."

So I remained Saturday at home, and ordered the preparation of my meat and drink and whatever I needed, and ordered my doorkeeper, and he shut the doors, and I instructed him not to let anyone in to me.

I asked permission<sup>1</sup> of Ar-Rashīd that there might be given me some day for being private with my household and my friends.

He granted me Saturday.

And I went home and began to prepare my meat and drink and whatever was needed, and ordered the doorkeepers to shut the doors and not to permit anyone to come in to me.

\* Cf. Agānī, v. 6.

<sup>1</sup> So Lane (from Ḥalba(t) al-Kumeit version).

<sup>2</sup> Lane here agrees with the Agānī.

<sup>3</sup> Lane adds "and he gave me two thousand dīnārs."

<sup>4</sup> Ahlwardt (l. c.) freely: "auf den Tag gebe ich nicht viel."

But while I was in my sitting-room with the women around me and maidens in line before me, behold I (was visited) by a sheikh of comely and reverend (aspect), clad in short boots and two fine shirts, a *kalansuwa*<sup>2</sup> on his head and in his hand a silverhooked staff, and wafting musk until the house and court were filled (with it).

Great annoyance penetrated me at his coming in to me in the face of what I had ordered, (annoyance) such as had never before penetrated me; and I thought to turn away my doorkeeper and chamberlains<sup>4</sup> on his account. But he saluted me in the best fashion, and I returned it and bade him be seated.

So he sat down. Then he began some stories of people and Arab battles<sup>5</sup> and stories and verses, until my anger was gone, and methought my servants had sought to please me by admitting one of such good breeding and elegance. Then I said "Are you (inclined) for meat?" He said "I have no want of it." I said "Are you (inclined) for drink?" He said "That is as you wish." So I drank a pint and poured him out the like.

Then he said to me: "Abu Ishâk,<sup>6</sup> are you (inclined) to sing us something of your art wherewith you have good custom from high and

But while I was in my sitting-room with the harem around me, behold (there appeared) a sheikh of comely and reverend (aspect), clad in white garments and a fine shirt, a *feilasân*<sup>2</sup> on his head and in his hand a staff with silver handle, and wafting perfume<sup>3</sup> until the court and porch were filled (with it).

Annoyance penetrated me at his coming in to me and I thought to turn away the doorkeepers.<sup>4</sup> But he saluted me in the best fashion, and I returned it and bade him be seated.

So he sat down and began telling me stories of the Arabs and their verses, until my anger left (me) and methought my servants had sought to please me by admitting one of such good breeding and culture. Then I said "Are you (inclined) for meat?" He said "I have no want of it." I said "And for drink?" He said "That is as you wish." So I drank a pint, and poured him out the like.

Thereupon he said to me: "Abu Ishâk, are you (inclined) to sing us something so we may hear of your art wherein you excel? high and

---

<sup>1</sup> يَتَرَدَّدْنَ بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ. For "women," the *Agânî* has الحُرْم with masc. pl. verb, the 1001 Nights الحُرِيم with fem. pl. verb (all eds.).

<sup>2</sup> Burton for *feilasân* "a doctor's turband." Lane does not know the form of the *kalansuwa*.

<sup>3</sup> Lane adds "from his clothes."

<sup>4</sup> Lane has "chamberlain" here and at the opening of the story. Ahlwardt refers the "turning off" to the visitor. This may be supported by the reading of the *Gotha* epitome, which he used.

<sup>5</sup> Likewise Lane, "tales of war."

<sup>6</sup> Lane "Ibrahim."

<sup>7</sup> So Lane.

low?" His speech angered me, but I showed it indifference, took the lute, tried it, then played and sang. He said "Well done, Ibrahim!"

"Then my anger increased, and I said: "He is not satisfied with coming in to me without permission and making demands upon me, but must call me by name instead of by surname and addressing me respectfully." Then he said "Will you go on (singing) to us?" I received the insult, took the lute and sang. He said, "Well done, Abu Ishâk! Finish, that we may repay you and sing to you." I took the lute and sang and took pains and completely rose up in what I sang to him, as I had never taken pains and arisen before the caliph or anyone else, because he said to me "I will repay you." He was delighted and said "Well done, my master!"<sup>5</sup>

Then he said "Will you give your servant<sup>6</sup> leave to sing?" I said "As you like," doubting his sense to sing in my presence after what he had heard from me. But he took the lute, tried it, tightened it—and, by Allah, I fancied it was speaking in the Arabic tongue for the beauty of its voice as I heard it. Thereupon he sang:

"I have a wounded heart; who will sell me  
"For it a heart having no wound (at all)?

low?" His speech angered me, but I showed the matter indifference, took the lute, played and sang. He said "Well done, Abu Ishâk!"<sup>1</sup>

(Then<sup>2</sup> says Ibrahim) I became more angry, and I said: "He is not content with coming in to me without permission and making demands upon me, but must call me by name, ignorantly addressing me." Then he said "Will you go on (singing)? We will repay you." I bore the annoyance, took the lute and sang, and took pains in what I sang and completely rose up because he said to me "We will repay you."<sup>4</sup> He was delighted and said "Well done, my master!"<sup>5</sup>

Then he said, "Will you give me leave to sing?" I said "As you like," doubting his sense to sing in my presence after what he had heard from me. But he took the lute, tried it, and, by Allah, I should have<sup>7</sup> fancied the lute was speaking in the pure Arabic tongue, with a sweet murmuring voice. And he began to sing these couplets:

"I have a wounded heart; who will sell me  
"For it a heart having no wound (at all)?

<sup>1</sup> Ṣalḥânî (Beirut, 5 vols.) corrects to "Ibrahim," in accordance with the context.

<sup>2</sup> Ṣalḥânî (Beirut, 5 vols.) omits *ثم*.

<sup>3</sup> Lane has "proves himself unworthy of my conversation" (a mis-translation?).

<sup>4</sup> The story is here divided by the customary formulas and part repetition of the foregoing words, to introduce the 688th night.

<sup>5</sup> Lane has "my master, Ibrahim."

<sup>6</sup> Similarly Lane, "your slave."

<sup>7</sup> *لقد* prefixed to the verb-form.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| "The people refuse me it; they will not sell it.     | "The people refuse to sell it to me.                 |
| "Who would buy damaged (goods) for sound?            | "Who would buy damaged (goods) for sound?            |
| "I groan for the pining which is in my sides         | "I groan for the pining which is in my flanks,       |
| "With the groans of a choked one, wounded by drink." | "With the groans of a choked one, injured by drink." |

And, by Allah, I thought the walls and doors and all that was in the house answered him and sang with him, for the beauty of the song, so that I fancied I and my limbs and clothes answered him. I abode amazed, unable to speak or answer or move, for the trouble of my heart. Then he sang :

And, by Allah, I thought the doors and the walls and all that was in the house answered him and sang with him, for the beauty of his voice,<sup>1</sup> so that I fancied that I heard my limbs and clothes answer him. I abode amazed, unable to speak or move, for the trouble of my heart. Then he sang these couplets :

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| "Culvers of Liwa ! (to your nests) return ; <sup>2</sup>          | "Culvers of Liwa ! (to your nests) return ; <sup>2</sup>          |
| "Your mournful voices thrill this heart of mine. <sup>3</sup>     | "Your mournful voices thrill this heart of mine. <sup>3</sup>     |
| "Returned they ; as they flew, they well nigh took                | "Then back a-copse they flew, and well nigh took                  |
| "My life, and made me tell my secret pine.                        | "My life, and made me tell my secret pine.                        |
| "With cooing call they repeatedly, as though                      | "With cooing call they one who's gone, as though                  |
| "Their breasts were maddened with the rage of wine : <sup>4</sup> | "Their breasts were maddened with the rage of wine : <sup>4</sup> |
| "Ne'er did mine eyes their like for culvers see                   | "Ne'er did mine eyes their like for culvers see                   |
| "Who weep, yet teardrops never dye their eyne."                   | "Who weep, yet teardrops never dye their eyne."                   |

(I do not know any air to these couplets traceable to Ibrahim. That which I do know to them is by Mo-

<sup>1</sup> Or "piece" صَوْتٌ.

<sup>2</sup> Following Burton's translation. Ahlwardt, "Culvers of the hedge, back hither return."

<sup>3</sup> Ahlwardt, "Euch girren hören ist mein einzig Glück."

<sup>4</sup> Agānī شَرِبْنِ ; 1001 Nights أَشْرَبْنِ. The translation of this line is too free to be faithful. Lit. "(as though) they had drunk wine or madness were in them."

ḥammed ibn al-Ḥarīṭ ibn Shoḥeir,  
[of the metre] *ḥafīf ramal*.)<sup>1</sup>

And Allah knows, by Allah, my  
reason was nigh distracted with  
delight and pleasure as I listened.

Then he sang :

"O Zephyr of Najd, when from  
Najd thou blowest,  
"Thy voyage heaps only on me  
new woe !  
"I moan with the moaning of love-  
sick grief,  
"Into grief doth all check and all  
effort blow.  
"Bespake me the turtle in bloom  
of morn,  
"From frail plant-twigg and the  
willow (bough);  
"They say lover wearies of love  
when far,  
"And is cured of love an afar he  
go ;  
"I tried every cure, which ne'er  
cured my love ;  
"But that nearness is better than  
farness I know."

Then he sang also these couplets :

"O Zephyr of Najd, when from  
Najd thou blowest,  
"Thy voyage heaps only on me  
new woe !  
"The turtle bespake me in bloom  
of morn  
"From the cassia-twigg and the  
willow (bough).  
"She moaned with the moaning of  
love-sick youth,  
"And exposed love-secret I ne'er  
would show ;  
"They say lover wearies of love  
when near,  
"And is cured of love an afar he  
go ;  
"I tried either(?) cure, which ne'er  
cured my love ;  
"But that nearness is better than  
farness I know.  
"Yet the nearness of love shall no  
'vantage prove,  
"An whoso thou lovest deny thee  
of love."

Then he said : "Ibrahim, this  
song is *māḥūrī*. Take it and keep  
to it in your singing, and teach it  
to your maidens." I said "Repeat  
it to me;" but he said : "There is  
no need to repeat it. You have  
learned it and have it all." There-  
upon he vanished from before me.  
I was amazed, rose for my sword,  
bared it, ran to the doors of the  
harem and found them closed. I

Then he said : "Ibrahim, sing  
this song which you have heard,  
and keep to it in your singing, and  
teach it to your maidens." I said  
"Repeat it to me;" but he said :  
"There is no need to repeat it.  
You have learned it and have it  
all." Thereupon he vanished from  
before me. I was astonished, rose  
for my sword, drew it, then hast-  
ened<sup>2</sup> to the door of the harem and

<sup>1</sup> This musical note is very interesting (Moḥ. ibn al-Ḥarīṭ was slightly younger and outlived Ibrahim, to the reign of Al-Ma'mūn). Of course it has no place in the Nights.

<sup>2</sup> As Burton notes, this song occurs without the last two hemistichs in Al-Mas'ūdī (Fr. transl. vii. 313); a good proof that the compiler of the Nights has made an addition, or copied it in from another.

<sup>2</sup> غَدَوْتُ (?)

said to the maidens "What have you heard in my room?" They said "We have heard the finest singing ever heard." I went out astounded to the house-door, found it closed, and asked the doorkeeper about the old man. He said: "What old man? By Allah, no one has come in to you to-day." So I went back to think over my adventure.

But lo, he called me from one of the corners of the house, and said: "No harm to you, Abu Ishâk! I am Iblîs, who have been your guest and companion to-day, so trouble not." Then I rode off to Ar-Rashîd, and said "May I never (again) present him with news like this." I entered his presence and told him the story. He said "Reflect upon the couplets, whether you learned them." I took the lute, tried them, and behold! they were so firm in my breast as not to have vanished. Ar-Rashîd was delighted and sat drinking, though he was not resolute in drinking, and ordered me a present and its delivery, and said "The sheikh was most wise in saying to you that you had learned them completely. Would he might some day favor us with his company, as he favored you!"

found it closed. I said to the maidens "What have you heard?" They said "We have heard the sweetest and finest of singing." I went out astounded to the house-door, found it closed, and asked the door-keepers about the old man. They said: "What old man? By Allah, no one has come in to you to-day." So I went back thinking it over.

But lo, he called me from one corner of the building, and said "No harm to you, Abu Ishâk! I am only Abu Murra, who have been your companion to-day, so fear not." Then I rode off to Ar-Rashîd and told him the story. He said "Repeat the pieces which you have learned from him." I took the lute and played, and behold! they were firm in my breast. Ar-Rashîd was delighted with them and began to drink to them, though he was not confirmed in drinking, and said "Would he might some day favor us with his company, as he favored you!" Then he ordered me a present; and I took it, and departed.